

5. HOUSING ELEMENT

Introduction

This element of the comprehensive plan identifies the housing needs and issues of people living in Lewis County and outlines housing policies for addressing housing issues over the next twenty years. The Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA) establishes the importance of an adequate supply of affordable housing. Housing is one of the thirteen major goals of the Act. The housing goal states:

Encourage the availability of affordable housing to all economic segments of the population of this state, promote a variety of residential densities and housing types, and encourage preservation of existing housing stock.

Lewis County has a considerable need to address these issues in the context of regional economic development and growth.

GROWTH MANAGEMENT ACT MANDATE

Addressing countywide housing needs requires a regional approach that involves all levels of government (federal/state/local) and the private sector. Each jurisdiction has a responsibility for meeting its obligations in addressing affordable housing issues in Lewis County. The greatest potential for promoting affordable housing is in the urban areas, given the intent of the Growth Management Act to direct most population growth to these areas, and to maintain lower densities in the rural area. Lewis County recognizes that development within cities and their unincorporated Urban Growth Areas is subject to inter-local agreements that may affect the type, style and location of housing. The Countywide Planning Policies are the most appropriate tool for advancing a countywide or regional housing strategy supported by the County, cities and towns, and other public and private entities.

The following GMA Planning Goal drives the formation and implementation of the County's housing goals and policies: *"Encourage the availability of affordable housing to all economic segments of the population of this state, promote a variety of residential densities and housing types, and encourage preservation of existing housing stock."*

The following Countywide Planning Policies (CPPs) provide specific guidance to the analysis and policies developed in this element:

- 4.0 Public/private partnerships should be encouraged to build affordable housing to meet the housing needs of people with low and moderate incomes and special needs populations.
- 4.1 The Comprehensive Plan and development regulations should include innovative land use management and construction techniques to promote affordable housing.
- 4.2 The existing affordable housing stock should be maintained where economically viable and efforts to rehabilitate older and substandard housing, which are otherwise consistent with Comprehensive Plan policies, should be encouraged.

During future updating of the CPPs, the county and the cities may wish to consider additional countywide planning policies such as the following suggested by other counties' plans. This would provide a stronger regional framework for seeking state and federal funding for low income and special needs housing throughout Lewis County:

- *“Local governments should allow for an adequate supply of land use options to provide for a wide variety of incomes, housing types, and densities.*
- *“Working with the private sector, Housing Authority, neighborhood groups, and other affected citizens to facilitate the development of attractive, quality low and moderate income housing that is compatible with the surrounding neighborhood and located with easy access to public transportation, commercial areas and employment centers.*
- *“Encourage a range of housing types and costs commensurate with the employment base and income levels of their populations, particularly for low, moderate and fixed income families.*
- *“When possible, provide assistance in obtaining funding and/or technical assistance for the expansion or establishment of low cost affordable housing for low, moderate and fixed income individuals and families.*
- *“Encourage local governments to extend infrastructure and provide other services to accommodate residential growth within the urban growth areas which are suitable for higher density growth.*
- *“Facilitate the development of affordable housing in a dispersed pattern so as not to concentrate or geographically isolate these housing types.*
- *“Maintain a multi-jurisdictional public/private organization to develop proposals for expanded low- and moderate income housing funding and services.*
- *“Maintain a monitoring program of annual housing production to track the location, cost, and other factors in comparison with annual census demographic characteristics of household incomes to assess the balance or imbalance of supply and demand for all housing needs.”*

ISSUES

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY - Lewis County faces challenges and opportunities as it works toward providing housing options for present and future generations. Every community needs affordable housing for all levels of income. Since a community is its residents, the jurisdiction has a responsibility to ensure they have a desirable place to live. Lewis County experiences a higher rate of unemployment and low-income residents than many other counties making it difficult for them to afford housing. The volatility of the housing finance market also endangers many households' abilities to own their own homes.

RURAL DENSITIES - The Comprehensive Plan seeks to provide for a variety of rural residential densities and housing opportunities within the confines of the Growth Management Act (GMA). Although the majority of unincorporated Lewis County is restricted by GMA mandates from providing higher density (urban) housing, such housing may also be provided in Limited Areas of More Intense Rural Development (LAMIRDs), accessory dwelling units (ADUs) and urban growth areas and by utilizing techniques such as clustering and housing preservation. Counties' roles in addressing the housing needs of very-low, low, and even moderate income households is constrained since development of this type of housing generally requires densities greater than those permissible in rural areas. In addition, higher density housing development generally triggers the requirement for sanitary sewer service, which is not allowed in rural areas. For-profit and non-profit developers therefore find it difficult to produce feasible projects given these (and other) constraints. Higher density development is possible in LAMIRDs, but the wastewater issue still can be of concern unless suitable on-site septic solutions are physically possible. As part of a countywide housing strategy, the County should prepare analyses of LAMIRDs where urban-scale housing development may be possible, and where county investment or regulatory incentives could be used to support the development of housing for households at or below 80% of median income.

FARM WORKER HOUSING - Housing to meet the needs of farm workers is essential to maintaining a healthy agricultural industry. The state Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development (CTED) is responsible for providing planning and development technical assistance, and funding assistance to organizations and individuals seeking to develop this important and unique type of housing.

HOUSING AUTHORITY – Very limited organizational infrastructure is in place for providing affordable housing in Lewis County. Section 8 Housing is administered by an out of county entity which limits local control and the supply of Section 8 vouchers.

HOMELESS – This segment of the population brings a whole set of housing and social service needs. CTED completed the 10-year plan to end homelessness in 2006 and conducts annual monitoring to assess progress in meeting the goals. State legislation has appropriated new county funds for this housing for the homeless and requires a 10-year county plan to end homelessness. Lewis County's Plan was adopted by Resolution 07-300 in October 2007. It provides strategies and funding allocations for provision of additional housing units and programs to address the needs of the homeless population. Individual housing providers may continue to apply for funding with the County's help to meet state and federal requirements to be eligible to receive funds.

Homeless individuals with mental illness, substance abuse, domestic violence and criminal justice system involvement and developmental disabilities are the most difficult segments of the population to serve. Another issue is the existing fragmentation of funding by government and philanthropic organizations that offers only partial solutions and fails to provide a holistic response to multiple-problem clients. Lewis County's 10-Year Plan strives to address this.

HOUSING STOCK – The condition of the existing housing stock in our county results in some sub-standard living conditions. Additional inspection, code enforcement and rehabilitation assistance are the means to address this issue. There is an abundance of older housing in Lewis County, some of which could be rehabilitated for use as affordable housing with appropriate financial assistance. Over one-third of the houses in Lewis County were built before 1950. These older houses are largely located in the incorporated cities. In several cities and towns, more than half of the housing stock dates from pre-1950 construction. This is true in Pe Ell, Winlock, Chehalis and Vader. Furthermore, Centralia, Morton and Toledo have close to 50% pre-1950 houses. Some older housing may exhibit substandard conditions. A countywide study of low income housing needs would be a way of defining possible rehabilitation strategies.

DISASTER MITIGATION – Lewis County is susceptible to natural hazards, particularly flooding. The County is preparing plans and programs for flood damage prevention and post disaster actions. These are intended to go beyond the current *Multi-jurisdictional Flood Hazard Mitigation Plan* in defining measures for addressing existing "at-risk" housing, refining measures for emergency

housing and services, and linking city and county programs with federal and state resources.

HOUSING RESOURCES

Few formal housing resources exist in Lewis County. The Longview Housing Authority, under contract, operates the county-wide Section 8 voucher program. As of June 2008, this program offers 177 vouchers for use by low-income households in approved housing. There are just under 600 households on the Section 8 waiting list. This number has increased substantially since 2006.

The Longview Housing Authority also manages the Washington state Tenant Based Rental Assistance (TBRA) grant program for the County. The TBRA Program provides homeless and low-income households with security and utility deposits and up to 12 months of rent assistance. Eligible households must have incomes that do not exceed 50 percent of the median household income for their area, according to the Income Limits published by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) on an annual basis. The Affordable Housing Network of Lewis County (the Network) has been recognized by the Board of County Commissioners as the body responsible for advising and assisting the county and its cities with issues of affordable housing earning less than 50% of the area median income and/or homeless citizens (Resolution Number 97-517, Oct. 6, 1997). The mission of the Network is to:

1. Conduct investigations to determine the housing needs and priorities of Lewis County citizens.
2. Prepare and recommend to the county legislative authority for approval the Continuum of Care and the 10 Year Plan for Lewis County.
3. Advise the County Commissioners as to a program of community services, which program shall reflect the fullest and most feasible utilization of already existing services.
4. Raise community awareness concerning the issue of the homeless citizens and the need for more affordable housing in Lewis County.
5. Explore solutions to the problems of the homeless citizens and the need for more affordable housing in Lewis County.
6. Promote more affordable housing.
7. Foster cooperation among service providers and assist in the flow of information.

8. Encourage the efficient and effective growth and development of community based solutions to low-income housing needs.
9. Monitor implementation of the Homeless and Low Income Housing Assistance Program and evaluate the performance of the program at least annually.

The Network has developed a countywide plan to address the housing needs of low income people in Lewis County, the Continuum of Care Plan for Lewis County (February 1999), which is adopted by reference into this Comprehensive Plan and included in the Appendix.

Various non-profit organizations within Lewis County provide homeless shelters, domestic violence shelters, short-term rent assistance, and various counseling services to low income families and individuals. The agencies serving the homeless provide a variety of other services including food, clothing, and referral to other service providers.

Table 5.8: Member Organizations of the Lewis County Affordable Housing Network

Human Response Network	Community Youth Services
Cascade Mental Health	Lewis County Bar Legal Aid
Department of Social and Health Services	Longview Housing Authority
Love in the Name of Christ	Valley View Health
Independent Associates	Lewis County Shelter Program
White Pass Community Services	WorkSource
Two-One-One (2-1-1)	Timberlands Regional Support
Lewis County Youth Programs	Homeless Representative
Choice Regional Health Network	ECEAP/Centralia College
Lewis County Head Start	Lewis County Social Services
Local Attorney-at-Large	

STRATEGIES

FUNDING PROGRAMS

DOWN PAYMENT ASSISTANCE

Community Development Block Grants (CDBGs), the HOME Investment Partnership Program (HOME) and Housing Opportunity Funds (HOF) all can be used to finance a down payment assistance program for households whose incomes are in the upper range of the low income category (60% to 80% of county median), whose household heads are employed and can demonstrate an acceptable credit history. Working with local lenders, typical programs use \$100,000 to \$200,000 annually to provide 5 to 10 deferred loans to leverage some \$400,000 to \$800,000 in private funds. Staff costs would be in the \$10,000 plus benefits range. An alternative structure is to contract with a local bank to package and process the loans upon referral from the program.

SELF-HELP HOUSING

Modeled after a USDA Rural Development programs such as the Lower Columbia Community Action Council program available to Housing Authorities, Community Action Agencies, and other eligible non-profits in "rural" areas, HOME funds can be used to provide material costs, technical assistance and training, and tools for construction of affordable starter homes by teams of peer-group, low income households. Upon completion of all of the team member's homes the participating parties move in and purchase the homes on a deed-of-trust at below market rate interest over a typical 20 to 30 year term. CDBG funds can be used initially to purchase the properties and complete site development. This is a labor intensive program that has proven very successful in many jurisdictions. Experienced housing authorities, community action programs and non-profits have successfully operated self-help programs within Lewis County. The Lower Columbia Community Action Council has initiated several self-help projects for Lewis County residents.

NON-PROFIT DEVELOPMENT

CDBG, HOME and HOF funds can be used to provide capital funding for non-profit organizations to develop affordable housing for low income home ownership or lease to own programs. Comprehensive Housing Development Organizations (CHDOs) are eligible for a specific set-aside of CDBG and HOME funds for such purposes. Community Land Trusts, Limited Equity Coops and other non-profit organizations specifically benefiting low income households are generally eligible to receive CDBG, HOME and HOF funds and grants from the

state Housing Trust Fund administered by CTED. These programs are often somewhat complex, and require an experienced non-profit organization with a track record of providing housing development services. CHDOs, the Community Action Council, and the housing authorities are eligible for this funding.

COMMUNITY ACTION PROGRAMS

Community Action Programs (CAPs) are special non-profit organizations organized under federal law to serve low-income people. Traditionally, due to funding sources, they have primarily operated weatherization and minor home repair programs and have provided a variety of home ownership counseling services. During the past ten years, CAPs in Washington have developed capacities in housing rehabilitation, Comprehensive Plans, and development in response to changes in Federal and State funding programs. Typically, they operate as sub-recipients to municipal agencies; however, some have become certified as CHDOs by HUD and are eligible to receive direct grant funds. The Lewis/Mason/Thurston CAP is a CHDO serving Lewis County.

FARMWORKER HOUSING

The state Farmworker Housing Program, administered by CTED and the USDA Rural Development Program, provides grants and loans to organizations and individuals for developing permanent and seasonal farmworker housing (WAC 246.359), including site infrastructure. Funding operation of seasonal housing and emergency assistance for homeless migrant farmworkers is also available. Biennial appropriations for the state program are provided by the Legislature. In addition, CTED administers a “one-stop clearinghouse” to coordinate state assistance for growers and nonprofit organizations in developing housing for agricultural employees, including: assistance on planning and design, building codes, temporary worker housing regulations, financing options, and management to growers and nonprofit organizations interested in farmworker construction. The clearinghouse also provides educational materials and services to local government authorities on Washington state law concerning farmworker housing.

OTHER STATE FUNDING

The “affordable housing for all” surcharge provided for in RCW 36.22.178 requires counties to levy a surcharge on all documents recorded by the county auditor. Forty percent of the revenue generated through this surcharge is transmitted monthly to the state treasurer who deposits the funds into the “affordable housing for all” account created in RCW 43.185C.190. CTED must use these funds to provide housing and shelter for extremely low-income

households, including, but not limited to, grants for building operation and maintenance costs of housing projects or units within housing projects that are affordable to extremely low-income households with incomes at or below 30 percent of the area median income, and that require a supplement to rent income to cover ongoing operating expenses.

The remaining funds generated by the surcharge must be used by the county and its cities and towns for eligible housing activities that serve very low-income households with incomes at or below 50 percent of the area median income. The portion of the surcharge retained by Lewis County is allocated to eligible housing activities that serve extremely low and very low-income households in the county and its cities according to an interlocal agreement between Lewis County and its cities consistent with countywide and local housing needs and policies. A priority is given to housing activities and programs that serve extremely low-income households. Eligible housing activities and programs funded by these county funds are limited to:

1. Acquisition, construction or rehabilitation of housing projects or units within housing projects, including units for homeownership, rental units, seasonal and permanent farmworker housing units, a single room occupancy (SRO) units.
2. Supporting building operation and maintenance costs of housing projects or units within housing projects eligible to receive housing trust funds that require a supplement to rent income to cover ongoing operating expenses.
3. Rental assistance vouchers for housing units to be administered by a housing authority or other local organization with an existing rental assistance voucher program consistent with or similar to HUD's Section 8 program standards.
4. Operating costs for emergency shelters and licensed overnight youth shelters.

HOUSING PROGRAMS

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Municipal agencies may operate any of the listed programs except the Section 8 program, the USDA Rural Development self-help housing program, and special CHDO funded CDBG and HOME programs. Federal funding from HUD (CDBG

or HOME) and state funding from CTED, usually requires a city or county government to be the funding recipient. Grant funds may be administered by contract with another (usually a non-profit) organization. There often is not sufficient funding in a grant to cover all of the administrative costs of operating a program by municipal staff. Then, the municipality covers the excess cost from general or special funds.

CONSOLIDATED HOUSING AUTHORITY

A consolidated housing authority is a countywide organization authorized by State law to operate housing and housing services programs for low-income people. The housing authority is the only type of organization authorized by HUD to operate the Section 8 Program. It can serve as a sub-recipient for CDBG and HOME funded programs sponsored by a city or county government, but cannot apply directly to these programs. The Housing Authority is eligible for most of the state's housing development grant programs, and, as a separate taxing entity, can pass and sell special purpose bonds to finance low- to moderate-income housing development or rehabilitation. Because of limited administrative funding availability, new housing authorities are typically funded by their enabling municipal jurisdictions for a period of three to five years while they develop capacity and build equity in owned projects. The Cowlitz Tribal Housing Authority is the only authority operating in Lewis County. It allows non-tribal members to participate in its housing programs. The Lewis County Board of County Commissioners has authorized the Longview Housing Authority to act on behalf of Lewis County as needed.

NON-PROFIT HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

There are a variety of non-profit housing development organization models throughout the Northwest. Typically, they act as sub-recipients to municipal agencies in providing low-income housing. They often benefit from being able to access private foundation funds, although these funds have been increasingly more difficult to get recently. Habitat for Humanity is an example of a successful nation-wide housing non-profit with vast experience in low-income housing development. Common Ground is a non-profit low-income housing developer that works in both urban and rural areas. The Lewis County Affordable Housing Network is a group of non-profit organizations that provide a variety of housing-related services, and offer the potential to build local capacity for low-income housing development.

Each of these housing resource programs and organizational structures must be carefully compared to current and projected housing needs in Lewis County as well as present organizational and financial resources.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING STRATEGIC PLAN

Over the next twenty years, Lewis County jurisdictions should diversify the housing supply to accommodate all income levels and household demographic conditions. The County should work with the cities to amend the Countywide Planning Policies and develop strategies to produce an action-oriented program for implementing regulatory, administrative, and financial measures. This will allow the County to prioritize actions that will be most effective in addressing short- and mid-term housing needs, and then shape additional strategies for more long-term, sustainable measures. Examples of potential strategies include incentives such as:

- Density bonuses for providing affordable housing;
- Taking additional action to support development of accessory dwelling units;
- Adopting special regulations for housing seniors and persons with special needs;
- Reviewing regulatory provisions to expedite permitting;
- Using surplus land for housing;
- Supporting a shared housing program; and
- Supporting regional efforts to provide affordable housing.

GOALS AND POLICIES

GOAL 1

Encourage diversity in the type, density and location of housing within the county and its cities while protecting the public health, safety, and quality of life.

POLICY 1.1

The location of new housing will be planned in consideration of the proximity to employment and access to transportation and community services and shopping.

POLICY 1.2

The impacts of new residential development on transportation requirements and other public facilities will be addressed through development standards.

POLICY 1.3

The county and other local governments will ensure adequate infrastructure to accommodate residential growth within urban areas (including LAMIRDs) which are suitable for urban density.

POLICY 1.4

Encourage innovative techniques such as accessory dwelling units (ADUs) and cluster housing development over low density sprawling development in the rural areas.

POLICY 1.5

The county will reduce regulatory barriers and other requirements which add unnecessary costs and thereby discourage affordable housing construction where appropriate. Some strategies to consider are revision or replacement or elimination of regulations that cause higher than expected costs to enable permit processing to be more predictable, removing uncertainty for both builders and lenders.

POLICY 1.6

The county will work with the private sector, the Lewis County Affordable Housing Network, neighborhood groups, the tribes and other affected citizens to facilitate the development of attractive, quality low- and moderate-income housing that is compatible with surrounding neighborhoods and is located with easy access to public transportation, commercial areas, and employment centers.

GOAL 2

Enough housing will be available to meet the housing needs of the existing and projected population of the county including rental and purchase opportunities for all income levels and persons with special needs.

POLICY 2.1

Work with cities to ensure group homes, foster care facilities and facilities for other special populations are located near services and public transportation routes wherever possible.

POLICY 2.2

The county will facilitate development of low-income and special needs housing, by considering techniques such as:

- a. Developing an inventory of publicly held land within rural and urban growth areas and make suitable parcels available (sale, lease, donation) for low-income housing and housing for special needs populations, where appropriate.
- b. Promote the use of surplus publicly owned vacant lands for special needs or transitional housing, where appropriate.

POLICY 2.3

The county will encourage self-help housing efforts and promote programs such as Habitat for Humanity and the Lower Columbia Community Action Council. The County will consider participating in efforts to revise legislation that discourages use of "sweat equity," volunteer, and self-help programs.

POLICY 2.4

The county will participate in the Housing Trust Fund (HTF), utilizing SHB 2060 funds to support extremely low income housing including special needs.

POLICY 2.5

The county will identify sufficient land for existing and projected residential needs including, but not limited to, government-assisted housing, housing for low-income families, single family housing, manufactured housing, and residential care facilities.

POLICY 2.6

The county will encourage housing opportunities for all citizens regardless of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, handicap disability, economic status, familial status, age, sexual orientation, or other discriminatory factors.

Policy 2.7

The county will initiate a monitoring program of annual housing production to track location, cost, and other factors in comparison with annual census demographic characteristics of household incomes in order to assess the balance or imbalance of supply and demand.

GOAL 3

Encourage the preservation and protection of existing residential areas and plan future development in a manner which promotes quality neighborhood settings and environments.

POLICY 3.1

Resolve residential/non-residential land use conflicts in the unincorporated areas through performance standards such as buffers, setbacks and other development standards.

POLICY 3.2

Residential construction adjacent to or within designated natural resource lands will be designed and sited to reduce potential land use conflicts and such housing will be considered secondary to the primary use of those areas.

GOAL 4

Preserve and maintain existing affordable housing, enhance the quality of substandard housing, and provide decent and affordable housing in Lewis County.

POLICY 4.1

The county will lead a countywide study of the quality and preservation, rehabilitation and redevelopment potential of the county's existing housing stock, and work with all jurisdictions to identify existing subsidized and low-cost non-subsidized housing that may be lost due to redevelopment, deteriorating housing conditions, or public policies and actions.

POLICY 4.2

The county will encourage the rehabilitation of substandard housing and maintenance of older housing which appears to be of sufficient quality to be rehabilitated rather than abated. Consider identifying geographic target areas or a series of priority areas for focused attention and resources.

POLICY 4.3

The County will consider participating in efforts to retain existing subsidized housing, such as:

- a. Encouraging the extension of existing contracts to avoid conversion of subsidized housing to market-rate units (for example, letters of support to landlords),
- b. The County will work with housing advocates and providers to develop sources of funding and strategies to enable the production of affordable housing, including multifamily tax exemptions, bond issues and levies, and grants and loan programs.

POLICY 4.4

The county will seek opportunities to identify, protect, and rehabilitate historic properties to meet housing goals.

GOAL 5

Promote safe and decent housing alternatives with a variety of housing types, neighborhood settings, price ranges, amenities, and natural settings that meet the changing population needs and are in close proximity to transportation, employment, shopping, and daily activities.

POLICY 5.1

The county will encourage a variety of residential development and ownership types will be available in urban and rural areas such as detached and attached single family housing, cluster housing, duplexes, planned developments, lot-size averaging, cohousing, condominiums, and mixed residential/commercial uses.

POLICY 5.2

The county will encourage accessory dwelling units (ADU) in all residential zones provided that development standards and design criteria are satisfied.

POLICY 5.3

Consistent with state law, the county will be flexible in permitting manufactured housing in the same locations and at the same density as other housing, not just in mobile home parks.

POLICY 5.4

The county will be flexible in permitting farm housing units for farm employees and their families in agricultural areas and on working farms (as defined in RCW 84.34.020).

POLICY 5.5

New farmworker communities will be approved through special use permit procedures.

POLICY 5.6

The county will allow one additional temporary dwelling unit, over and above the maximum number of units permitted on a lot by zoning, for family members within the lower density rural areas outside the UGA. Family member units will be removed after they are no longer used by family members.

POLICY 5.7

The county will strive to improve permit processing services, including pre-application materials and consultations.

POLICY 5.8

Zoning and subdivision regulations will provide for the efficient use of lands for residential development through incentives that take advantage of site development suitability, infrastructure, and market feasibilities.